

**CONNECTICUT VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
TESTIMONY TO THE CGA HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT  
ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE REGARDING HB 6292: AN ACT  
CONCERNING AN APPROPRIATION TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO  
SCHOOLS OF VETERINARY MEDICINE**

February 10, 2009

Thank you Senator Handley, Representative Willis and members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 6292, an act concerning an appropriation to provide assistance and access to schools of veterinary medicine. The Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association greatly appreciates the support of the legislature in appropriating \$100,000 in FY 07 for veterinary education for Connecticut residents. The University of Connecticut, in agreement with the Department of Higher Education, negotiated bids from veterinary schools and chose Iowa State University where they purchased 5 seats for freshman year of 2008. Even though the seats were announced late in fall of 2007, 43 students applied for those 5 seats, and interviews were conducted in Feb, 2008, and those students are halfway through their first year.

As you know, prior to this we were only one of 3 states with no veterinary school or contracted seats. The difficulty this poses is illustrated by Colorado State's Veterinary School where acceptance to applicant ratios are 1:3 for residents, 1:4 for contract seats, and 1:33 for out of state applicants. This bill has truly improved the chances for some of our residents to pursue this career.

Your support is requested to fully fund this bill to continue this program. For the students starting in 2008, this means \$100,000 per year for four years. To keep the program growing and meaningful, this means an additional \$100,000 per year until we have a full roster, which means a fully funded program starting in 2011 would require \$400,000 per year. Iowa State is helpful and willing to fill this program and would even provide more seats per year!

We strongly feel that improved access to veterinary education is not only important to Connecticut residents who wish to pursue a career in this field, but also to all of the residents of Connecticut. The reasons this program is important:

To correct an inequity for our residents who wish to pursue this career.

Veterinarians are needed and in short supply in many sectors both in Connecticut and nationally:

Treatment of companion animals and livestock

Public health – veterinarians are on the forefront of fighting and researching zoonotic diseases that affect both animals and humans, such as West Nile, Avian Influenza, Lyme, Rabies, Mad Cow Disease, Anthrax

Food Safety – veterinarians are an integral part of food inspection

Homeland security – as related to the food supply and infectious diseases and service dogs

Pharmaceutical industry – development of human and animal medicines

Academia – faculty and research

Federal and state government – USDA, military, public health service, CDC

Current numbers for Connecticut veterinarians give us concern for following the trend nationally for the predicted shortage of veterinarians, especially in the public health and food animal sectors. Recent survey results indicate a need for concern even in our companion animal medicine in Connecticut.

2007 CVMA survey:

Years to retirement: 281 responded (out of about 600 members)

A total of 37% in 10 years

Increasing to 55% in 15 years

Average time to fill any openings: 105 responded (practice owners)

29% > 1 year

60% > 6 months

Keep in mind that many practices feel that they don't have enough veterinarians and that previous estimates indicate a need for 25 veterinarians per year to fill current positions.

Students who establish residency in other states to get into school often do not return. The cost of out of state tuition results in loans in excess of \$150,000 for these students after 4 years of education. Therefore they are less likely to move to a state with a perception of a high cost of living. These contacted seats give us a greater likelihood of retaining these veterinarians.

We strongly urge you to support HB 6292.

Sincerely,

Eva Ceranowicz DVM  
Chair, Government Affairs Committee  
Immediate Past President  
Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association